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Values-Based Practice in EBLIP: A Review

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Article abstract

Objective – This narrative literature review examines how values and a values-based practice framework are positioned as significant to evidence based practice in libraries. This includes examining the partnership between values and evidence in decision making and reflective practice. The review responds to a gap in the literature on the origins and application of values-based practice in evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP).

Methods – Searches for this narrative review were conducted in library and information science databases, discovery tools, and individual journals. Forward and backward citation searches were also undertaken. Searches aimed to encompass both the EBLIP and library assessment literature. Research and professional publications were considered for inclusion based on their engagement with values and values-based practice in EBLIP processes and decisions.

Results – The findings highlight how values reflect positionality, driving action and decision making in all stages of evidence based practice in libraries. The literature emphasizes the role of values when practitioners engage with critical reflective practice or invite user voices in evidence. An explicit values-based practice approach was evident in the library assessment literature, though not explicitly addressed in the EBLIP literature or EBLIP models. This is despite a partnership between evidence based practice and values-based practice in the health sciences literature, with literature on person-centred approaches aiming to relate evidence to individuals.

Conclusions – The EBLIP literature could further examine how values reflect positionality and drive action and decision making across all stages of evidence based practice. Values-based practice offers an opportunity to critically reflect on whose voices, perspectives, and values are reflected in and contribute to the library and information science evidence base.

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Review Article

Values-Based Practice in EBLIP: A Review

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Abstract

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though not explicitly addressed in the EBLIP literature or EBLIP models. This is despite a partnership between evidence based practice and values-based practice in the health sciences literature, with literature on person-centred approaches aiming to relate evidence to individuals.

Conclusions – The EBLIP literature could further examine how values reflect positionality and drive action and decision making across all stages of evidence based practice. Values-based practice offers an opportunity to critically reflect on whose voices, perspectives, and values are reflected in and contribute to the library and information science evidence base.

Introduction

Evidence based practice (EBP) has come to be a significant feature of library and information science (LIS), at individual and organizational levels. It is used to engage in decision making and continuous service improvement and to demonstrate the reach, impact, and value of library services. Existing approaches to evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP) provide a structured and rigorous framework to collecting, evaluating, and applying evidence to practice (Thorpe & Howlett, 2020). As libraries engage with evidence that captures user voices, it is paramount that there is an understanding of the values that drive approaches to EBLIP and the decisions around it. This includes recognizing the values that underlie motivations for undertaking specific EBP activities (Doucette, 2016) and how they reflect positionality (Magnus et al., 2018).

Values-based practice emphasizes that decision making needs to consider “preferences, needs, hopes, [and] expectations” (Fulford, 2008, p. 10) in hand with the best type of evidence. Such considerations include values that should be integrated into and underpin the decision-making process. Values are not only relevant to decision making but are “explicitly present” in decision making (Fulford, 2008, p. 11). Values are “action guiding” (Hare, 1952, p. 163). They have an evaluative and prescriptive element that functions to guide choices (Hancock, 1963). Informed by this understanding, this review adopts Doucette’s (2016) definition of values, in the EBLIP context, where they are the “beliefs and codes of behaviour that guide actions and decisions” (p. 289).

While there is an overlap and often synonymous use of “EBLIP” and “library assessment,” this review recognizes their potential differences in scope. This is seen in Ryan’s (2006) evaluation that “in assessment work, evidence can only be local” and will largely centre on local user experiences and perceptions (p. 79). Building on this, Koufogiannakis and Brett (2016) describe assessment as being a *component* of EBLIP, whereby library professionals “gather and create local evidence” specifically for assessment (p. 35). Considering this distinction, the review looks at how the EBLIP literature might engage with the broader LIS literature on values and critical practice, as well as with the existing assessment literature on these areas. Thus, this review draws from library assessment literature that is more overtly engaged with the topic of values-based practice. This is to then determine how a values-based practice approach might be engaged throughout EBLIP.

Aim

This narrative review aims to present a synthesis of the literature on the role and application of values-based practice in EBLIP. It examines the role of values in EBLIP and examines the relevance and innateness of values-based practice to existing EBLIP models. While values are addressed in much of the

literature on critical library assessment, EBLIP literature has not explicitly discussed values to the same extent. Thus, this review is guided by the questions:

- How are values and a values-based approach significant to EBLIP?
- How does values-based practice align with EBLIP processes?

The findings are intended to inform both library practice and future LIS research in considering how a values-based approach might be embedded across all stages of EBLIP.

Following this introduction, the method for undertaking this narrative literature review is described. The findings of this review are then presented, starting with an overview of values in LIS and the origins of values-based practice. The article then looks at different themes that highlight the relationship between values and evidence. These themes include values and the EBLIP model, reflective practice, and critical assessment practices. Finally, a discussion section explores the application of these findings to practice. It considers how values and evidence might work in partnership in practice and future research.

Method

The search strategy adopted for this literature review was carried out across several databases and individual journals with relevant search techniques. It aimed to capture a contextual overview of values-based practice, in addition to evidence of its relevance to EBLIP. As a narrative review, the searches were not intended to be systematic and this paper does not aim to present an exhaustive or systematic review of values-based practice.

Databases searched were primarily from the social sciences and included: EBSCOhost: Academic Search Ultimate, Library & Information Science Abstracts (LISA), and Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA). Google Scholar was also used as a discovery tool. The searches allowed for an interdisciplinary context that recognized the original health sciences context of values-based practice. While some of this literature is outside of, or peripheral to, the LIS sector, the application of values-based practice to EBLIP remains the focus of this review. Relevant non-scholarly literature (from professional publications in the LIS field) was included in this review, as well as literature already known to the author or encountered through serendipitous discovery. Serendipitous discovery refers to the “timely and useful, but unexpected, outcomes, discoveries, or even tangents which occurred while in quest of something else” (Liestman, 1992, p. 525). In this review, serendipitous discovery was predominantly grounded in the author’s existing background knowledge (Workman et al., 2014), which helped facilitate conditions for encountering relevant literature outside of active searching or browsing.

Initial searches included variations of the search phrase (“*values-based practice*” OR “*values based practice*” OR “*value based practice*”) AND (“*evidence-based practice*” OR “*evidence based practice*”) AND *librar**. Variations of (*librar** OR “*information professional**” OR “*information science*”) were also included to narrow searches to LIS literature. Searches in LIS databases were widened by removing the term “evidence-based practice.” This recognized the instances where values-based practice might not be explicitly described as EBLIP and also captured library assessment literature. Library assessment literature was selected for inclusion in this review but was not explicitly included as a search term, as there was a need to broaden, not narrow, searches in the LIS literature.

Searches in LISA and LISTA revealed a non-peer reviewed article by Schachter (2007) on “value-based practice.” This article was excluded, however, as it refers to “value-based” with regards to the business management concept, focused on value creation for stakeholders. *Value*-based management is recognized as distinct from the values-based practice identified in the health sciences alongside EBP. The latter is focused on the principles or standards that define judgements in decision making, rather than the generation of business value. While EBLIP outcomes are often used to demonstrate a library’s value to stakeholders, the focus of this review is on values as “action guiding” (Hare, 1952, p. 163).

Searches in LIS journals were broader and less specific than in databases and discovery tools. Search terms included either “values” or “values-based,” these being searched both alone and in combination with the term “evidence-based.” Individual journals searched included *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, and *portal: Libraries and the Academy*. While synthesizing the literature, forward and backward citation searches were also undertaken, using reference lists, Google Scholar, and the citation database Scopus.

Findings

Defining Values-Based Practice

In its original health sciences context, EBP is positioned as complementary to values-based practice (Fulford, 2008; Stoyanov et al., 2020). Values-based practice is considered a “primarily skills-based approach to working with complex and conflicting values” (Fulford, 2008, p. 12). Just as many practice-based disciplines beyond the library sector employ evidence based practice (Wilson, 2017, p. 185), a range of professions and disciplines have engaged with values-based practice. It is found in literature across such areas as medical and health sciences (Fulford, 2008), educational psychology (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2022), higher education (Dai et al., 2021), and academic psychology with “mātauranga (Māori knowledge, culture, values and worldview) and tikanga (Māori practices)” (Nutbrown et al., 2021, p. 21).

Values-based practice takes a person-centred approach that relates evidence to individuals. It is intended to model and produce a partnership, despite the presence of conflicting values (Fulford, 2008, p. 12). In health sciences, values are the “unique preferences, concerns and expectations each patient brings to a clinical encounter and which must be integrated into clinical decisions if they are to serve the patient” (Straus et al., 2018, p. 1). They are considered an integrated and integral aspect of EBP (Fulford, 2008). In a setting that requires engagement with service users, engaging with values can help to ensure a holistic service that considers what is important to the user (Strudwick, 2021, p. 118). Thus, values-based practice is considered not only complementary but “an essential partner” to EBP (Fulford, 2008, p. 19). Differences in values are made explicit and are recognized as an asset rather than a problem.

LIS Values and Ethics in Practice

Values and ethics are established topics across the LIS research literature (Berg & Jacobs, 2016; Koehler, 2003; Miller, 2007; Young, 2020a) and are embedded in core values policy statements from LIS professional associations (Australian Library and Information Association, 2018). Rigling et al. (2018), however, describe how the focus of library research is on “demonstrating library value to external stakeholders as opposed to understanding library values” (para. 11). Likewise, Nicholson (2017) states that “as a profession, we’ve become veritably obsessed with value” (p. 2). This focus on generating “value” is largely reflected in the EBLIP and library assessment literature, where being able to demonstrate and provide evidence of value and impact is an expected outcome. For Drabinski and

Walter (2016), “theory and practice should be mutually informative in our field, and inquiry into ‘values’ should occupy as privileged a place as inquiry into ‘value’” (p. 267). While the broader LIS literature includes inquiry into values and is labelled “values-based” (Miller, 2007), the concept of “values-based practice,” as an action-guiding process or framework, is not delineated in the EBLIP literature to the same extent.

The specific phrase “values-based practice” is not widely used in the LIS literature, though various research articles, case studies, and assessment literature actively demonstrate the concept. Rigling et al. (2018) examine developing a values-based open access statement and Mavrinac (2005) explores values-based learning, leadership, and change. In the library assessment literature, Young (2020b) examines professional values and explicitly addresses “values-based decision-making in the practice of library assessment” (slide 2). Doucette (2016) also analyzes the values-based motives for undertaking assessment work. This body of research largely exists in the assessment literature, and work by Nicholson (2017) and Douglas (2020) actively engages with themes of critical librarianship or other critical theoretical approaches.

In the EBLIP research literature, values-based practice has not been explicitly positioned as a framework that can be applied or adapted by practitioners. Brettle (2012) reflects on the ethical values and research that underpin EBLIP’s origins in the health sciences, and how core values should also position LIS professionals’ knowledge and practice within a wider context. Much of the EBLIP literature builds on this engagement with core values by encouraging critical reflective practice. Miller et al. (2020) highlight the relevance of reflective practice models from other professions to EBLIP, such as Kim’s *Critical Reflective Inquiry Model*, Gibbs’ *Reflective Cycle Model*, and a *Situation, Evidence, Action (SEA) Change Model*. Such models can facilitate the application of ethics in practice by allowing an exploration of professional, personal, and organizational values. This is dependent, however, on library practitioners purposefully and consistently engaging with reflection throughout EBLIP processes (Miller et al., 2020, p. 361).

In the library assessment literature, Young (2020a) suggests that future research might actively apply a “lens of practical ethics” to assessment practice (p. 16). This lens positions ethics as the application of values and “prompts the practitioner to ask how one should behave in particular situations, with all of the attendant contextual factors and conflicts” (Young, 2020a, p. 4).

Given the extensive literature on developing an EBLIP model that offers a “realistic depiction of the EBLIP processes” and supports critical reflective practice (Thorpe, 2021, p. 119), EBLIP literature might also pursue a complementary lens or framework that positions values-based practice alongside EBP in libraries.

Values in the EBLIP Model

The EBLIP model has evolved to become a “holistic and realistic depiction” of processes that apply to individual practitioners or groups and that help to “foster critical reflective practice” (Thorpe, 2021, p. 119). The “5As” model of EBLIP proposed by Koufogiannakis (2013a) has the stages: Articulate, Assemble, Assess, Agree, and Adapt. Thorpe also proposes an important sixth stage: Announce or Advocate. This sixth stage recognizes the significance of “communicating EBLIP outcomes and process to the local community and the professional evidence base” (Thorpe, 2021, p. 117). The “5As” EBLIP model specifically encourages reflective practice as a crucial aspect of EBP (Koufogiannakis, 2010). This involves asking and proposing questions, and Eldredge (2000) claims that “questions drive the entire EBL [evidence based librarianship] process” (p. 292). Koufogiannakis and Brettle (2016, pp. 19–20) agree, but

also highlight the many considerations that should occur when formulating questions so that they require reflection on “values in practice.” As such, the reflective questions suggested by Koufogiannakis and Brett (2016, p. 15) point to the presence of underlying values that will inform and drive a library’s evidence needs and processes.

Values inform the questions that are asked and the actions taken in decision making throughout the entire EBLIP process. Values are explicitly identified by Koufogiannakis (2013a, p. 14) in the Agree stage. The Agree stage is where evidence is used to determine a course of action and implement decision making, and Koufogiannakis (2013a) suggests asking: “Is the decision in keeping with our organization’s goals and values?” (p. 14). It is, however, from the very outset of the EBLIP process that values inform decision making. In the first Articulate stage, where questions are formulated, Koufogiannakis and Brett (2016) propose considering the goals, purpose, and assumptions that are present, and this requires considering the underlying values behind why something is significant to address. Likewise, Drabinski and Walter (2016) recognize the need to not only ask questions on the *what* and *how* of library research but also the *why*. Here, values inform not only the questions asked throughout EBP, but also how evidence is later assembled and assessed (Koufogiannakis & Brett, 2016, p. 20).

Values in Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is recognized as critical to EBLIP (Booth, 2003; Koufogiannakis, 2010; Miller et al., 2020). This is especially for aspects related to professional knowledge (Hallam, 2018, p. 455). While reflection can take many forms, both formal and informal, in professional practice it is a process of thoughtfully considering actions and events, either as they happen or after the fact, and applying this knowledge to practice (Miller, 2020). This is with the purpose of improving practice and building understanding and awareness around it. Hallam (2018) maintains that “EBLIP represents the mind-set of a critically reflective practitioner” (p. 457) and Booth (2003) also suggests that EBLIP’s future lies in “a more encompassing approach that embodies reflective practice” (p. 70). Critical reflective practice requires challenging assumptions as part of reflective inquiry and includes recognizing power dynamics (Brookfield, 1998). It extends reflection to include the “examination of one’s own assumptions about professional practice as well as assumptions of the profession and the broader culture” (Miller, 2020, p. 18). The questions that Koufogiannakis (2013a) poses within the EBLIP model are indicative of a reflective approach across all stages of EBLIP. These questions allow for underlying values to be considered at all stages, and they present values as inherent to any decisions that inform the EBP process. This includes values-based reflection on the actions taken for data creation and evidence collection, evaluation, and application.

In EBLIP, reflective practice and values culminate in actions. Miller et al. (2020) determine that critical reflective practice helps not only to identify personal and professional values, but also to explore “where thoughts and actions diverge from these values” and the “courses of action that are consistent with these values” (p. 354). Both Miller et al. and Thorpe (2021) draw a link between fostering critical reflective practice (that exposes bias, assumptions, structures, and values in decision making) and critical librarianship in EBLIP. Considering EBLIP and critical librarianship, Thorpe (2021) describes how “increasing the quality, quantity, and diversity of work contributed to the evidence base should also foster inclusion and diversity of opinion, inviting more voices and alternative perspectives into the profession” (p. 122).

This highlights how values are also present in the final Advocate or Announce stage of EBLIP, as the “critical nature of questioning that starts with the Articulate stage should reach a logical conclusion with

Advocacy” (Thorpe, 2021, p. 122). Values-based practice offers an opportunity to critically reflect on whose voices, perspectives, and values are reflected in and contribute to the LIS profession’s evidence base.

Values are recognized as a “stabilizing element” in LIS professional practice, and reflective practice is important for examining any bias or assumptions that underlie values (Young, 2020a, p. 3). Professional values, however, may appear as an aspirational ideal, remaining abstract rather than realized in practice. Froehlich (2000) maintains that values are realised and measured through the choices of library professionals and library users. As such, EBP may present both a “measure” of the application of professional values, while also being an outcome of the values that drive it. Froehlich (2000) explains how “this measure is drawn against the kinds of actions, choices and implementations that the ideal information professional or librarian would make in a specific context at a specific time” (p. 271).

Further, when values are realized as contextually dynamic, a “professional may be the best gauge of how to embody a value or set of values ... for a given situation” (Froehlich, 2000, p. 271). Similarly, Jacobs and Koufogiannakis (2014) argue that EBLIP does not provide a final solution or necessarily *the* “best” answer but will help to provide the best response or decision for a particular time and context. Thus, identifying and actively engaging with values requires significant reflection on decision-making processes in a specific LIS context.

Values in Critical Assessment Practices

An organizational culture of EBLIP can incorporate a culture of assessment through engagement with local evidence. Regardless of the extent to which EBLIP and library assessment are considered synonymous, assessment practices remain relevant to EBP processes and both concepts overlap considerably. Critical assessment sees practitioners explicitly considering matters of power, privilege, and positionality, recognizing library assessment as both a social and political act (Magnus et al., 2018). This means examining and critically reflecting on one’s own underlying assumptions and choices, and on whom assessment is for. Like values-based practice, critical approaches to library assessment respond to social context. Critical approaches recognize that everyone involved in assessment are “individuals affected by social, political, and economic drivers” (Benjes-Small et al., 2019, para. 1). Thorpe (2021) identifies how the “critical nature of questioning” that courses through all EBLIP stages sees EBLIP align with the critical librarianship movement (p. 122). From the outset, the use of evidence should reflect an awareness of organizational behaviour (and thus values) that is “named and professionally discussed” to counter bias in decision making (Koufogiannakis, 2013b, p. 197).

Library assessment literature has presented a focus on critical librarianship and critical practices, with a values and ethics orientation (Benjes-Small et al., 2019; Douglas, 2020; Fisher et al., 2019; Magnus et al., 2018; Nicholson, 2017; Young, 2020a, 2020b). In work by Young and Brownotter (2018), critical and reflective approaches to assessment are implemented through participatory design practices, which provide a “values-driven approach to co-creation” (Introduction). This repositioning of assessment practices is also seen in higher education more broadly, where Wall et al. (2014) advocate for engagement with a social and values-driven context. They reflect on how:

By raising consciousness of the ethical and value-based decisions implicit in any assessment context, the practice of assessment truly becomes a complex social practice rather than a collection of technical data gathering approaches that might unwittingly serve power interests unintended by well-meaning individuals. (p. 13)

Critical assessment requires recognizing social complexity and context. Thus, individual library practitioners have a responsibility to engage in making “interpretive judgments” during the assessment process, especially in assessing evidence (Wall et al., 2014, p. 12). Since context defines evidence and requires interpretation, findings are not simply self-evident. It is through critical reflection of context that biases in assessment or EBP practices might be addressed (Magnus et al., 2018). This includes reflection on the existing individual, organizational, and institutional values and norms brought into assessment practices.

Extending beyond critical library assessment, assessment can also be positioned as a “practice of care,” which Douglas (2020) advocates for. Assessment as care aims to dismantle the dominant and accepted narrative of assessment as advocacy and reporting, and instead recognizes assessment as an “inherently relational act” that “prioritizes care over justification, connection over reporting, and people over products” (Douglas, 2020, p. 47). Douglas (2020) concludes that this can be uncomfortable and that “it complicates our work of data collection, visualization, and comparison because feelings, care, and concern don’t fit within the confines of an assessment dashboard” (p. 61). Assessment as care does not fit into existing practices of either teaching or assessment in libraries, especially academic libraries (Douglas, 2020, p. 60). A critical reflective practice, however, means engaging with the discomfort of critical dialogue on our practices and biases (Preater, 2020), which inevitably extends to our values. In a profession that has been warned of being “more interested in process and structure than people” (Wiegand, 1999, as cited in Samek, 2007, p. 4), values-based practice may help to realize person-centred EBLIP processes, with dialogue that elevates relationships and care in evidence.

Values are often regarded as “aspirational” rather than “realized” in librarianship (Young, 2020a, p. 3). Thus, Young (2020b) actively seeks to apply values-based practice to ethical dilemmas in librarianship, demonstrating a practical application in and beyond library assessment. Young (2020c) makes three recommendations (or steps) for values-based assessment decisions, which are: value identification, ethical attunement, and critical self-reflection. Ethical attunement refers to recognising, and being aware and responsive to, ethical dilemmas and choices. Together, these three steps set a practical lens to guide the application of ethics stemming from core professional values. In EBLIP, similar steps to those that Young (2020b) suggests could be modelled, encompassing local evidence, professional knowledge, and research literature. Presently, the EBLIP literature does not address values as overtly as Young does in the library assessment literature. Young’s (2020a) framework for values-based practice drives its practical application as “shared values then become the operational principles of an ethical practice” (p. 4). The “6As” EBLIP model (including Thorpe’s [2021] addition) could see values-based practice applied across distinct stages of EBP, at both individual and organizational levels, with critical reflection and values embedded iteratively throughout the process.

Discussion

Values and Evidence as a Partnership

Values-based practice is consistently considered in partnership with EBP in the health sciences literature (Fulford, 2008; Peile, 2013; Stoyanov et al., 2020). Fulford (2008) reflects that “values as well as evidence underpin all decisions” (p. 11). This is regardless of whether values are explicit or not. Just as EBLIP helps to navigate evidence for decision making and continuous service improvement, values-based practice helps to navigate the values inherent to decision making in library services and EBLIP processes. Looking to values and evidence together may help to ensure that services and practices are holistic and can engage with what is significant to users (Strudwick, 2021, pp. 118–119).

The diverse range of values that might be considered in the EBLIP process invites competing values in decision making. Values may reflect the experiences or positionality of a library's users, individual professionals, the parent organization, or the wider LIS sector. This can include competing values within the library's own organizational culture (Currie & Shepstone, 2012), which may inform how evidence is applied to operational or strategic decision making. When working with conflicting values, developing a values-based approach may offer a process to resolve conflict or ethical dilemma (Fulford, 2008). Additionally, values-based practice should also be evidence based. That is, understanding and collecting information on the values involved in practice should not be informed by intuition alone. A skilled approach to ascertaining values (Peile, 2013), especially around users and library communities, should be applied. This positions values-based practice as complementary to EBP, with a potential for alignment or partnership in approaches to either.

Conflicting values may also extend to what evidence is valued in different contexts. Where EBLIP should consider the "views, preferences and values" of its community (Booth & Brice, 2004, p. 5), different professional or disciplinary values (outside of LIS) may require consideration. This can highlight differences in how a culture of EBP is developed and how the "philosophies and values on which the culture is based" are understood (Hallam, 2018, p. 460). In libraries, this could mean inviting and valuing a humanities perspective of evidence, as Jacobs and Koufogiannakis (2014) suggest. Adopting a humanities perspective in EBLIP means accepting that "theory and reflection are valid and reliable forms of evidence" (Jacobs and Koufogiannakis, 2014, p. 116). This means embracing uncertainty in research inquiry, to question, examine, and change, our decisions, practices, and core values.

Looking to EBP collaboration outside of the library, Adams et al. (2016) describe the need to reflect on professional differences between librarians and a university education faculty. In this instance, Adams et al. explore how librarians might support teaching EBP as professional competency in education, rather than EBLIP in libraries. While not centred on EBLIP, the study still highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of different disciplinary values, including what is considered as evidence within different research paradigms and modes of inquiry. Just as within the LIS sector, Adams et al. (2016) recognize that in education, evidence is to be "guided by the values of the client and the community" (p. 698). It is by identifying and understanding these disciplinary values that librarians might "initiate and extend collaborations with education faculty" (Adams et al., 2016, p. 717). Significantly, this requires negotiating "what 'counts' as knowledge" and what values are ascribed to evidence (Adams et al., 2016, p. 718).

The role of values alongside evidence means recognizing that EBP is not in opposition to values, as it has sometimes been framed (Fulford et al., 2013, p. 403). Values are, then, not separate or contradictory to collecting empirical evidence. In the LIS literature, Booth and Brice's (2004) early definition of EBP calls for the "best available evidence"; however, this is to be "moderated by user needs and preferences" (p. 7). That is, practitioner research findings need to be mediated "by the views, preferences and values of the community within which the evidence is to be implemented" (Booth & Brice, 2004, p. 5). The social context that evidence sits within is recognized and library users are considered significant to understanding evidence.

User Voices and Values

In taking a person-centred approach, values-based practice can bring increased acknowledgement of user voices in libraries. In the health sciences, EBP's "attention to clients' values and expectations" aims to position clients as "active participants in the decision-making processes" (Gambrill, 1999/2018, p. 289). Definitions of EBLIP recognize the values and preferences of library users as a form of evidence to inform

decision making (Booth & Brice, 2004, p. 7; Eldredge, 2012, p. 139), and there is an increased interest from libraries in incorporating user experience as evidence (Lewis, 2016, p. 107). Such values are often considered “soft” evidence sources, as they relate to the user experience and preferences. Soft evidence sources are those that are more informal or anecdotal and often tell a story or contribute to a larger narrative within a specific local context (Koufogiannakis, 2013a; Lewis, 2016).

In academic libraries (Scoulas et al., 2021) and across higher education (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), the concepts of “student voice” and “students as partners” have helped to guide the collection of user- and person-centred evidence. These concepts are intended to drive decision making that positions students as partners, and they have continued to feature in inclusive library decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic (Appleton, 2020; Milton & Meade, 2018; Scoulas et al., 2021). Matthews (2019, p. 1), considering higher education more broadly, suggests that “students as partners” should be enacted as a values-based practice, one that actively represents the values of partnership. The values-based co-creation of partnership that Matthews (2019) describes can extend to an evidence base that prioritizes libraries’ partnerships with their respective communities.

EBP in partnership with values-based practice can help to engage with library users’ values and to centre community. This may invite a more inclusive approach to data collection and build a diverse evidence base both locally and across the LIS sector. For libraries with student communities, Fisher et al. (2019) suggest several questions that guide a critical approach to library assessment practices, which include:

- “How do institutional assumptions and agendas shape the student data we collect?”
- “Where does our accountability lie in the creation and use of student data?”
- “Are we engaging students in the creation, analysis, and communication of data and insight?” (p. 29).

These questions direct attention to users’ values and expectations. They support building an evidence base that is contextualized by values and committed to engaging with values. Such practice offers an opportunity to critically reflect on whose voices, perspectives, and values are reflected in and contribute to the LIS profession’s evidence base.

A focus on users’ values relies on library professionals engaging in critical reflection on their own values, in addition to organizational and professional values. Rigling et al. (2018) describe confronting an assumption that organizational values were “clear cut” and aligned with users’ needs around open access. Instead, Rigling et al. determine that individual staff values presented with more nuance than expected. It was “by turning the lens that we use to understand the needs of our users on ourselves [that] we were able to unpack our individual values and create a meaningful, grassroots policy statement on OA” (Rigling et al., 2018, para. 2).

This values-based process resulted in challenging the idea that organizational policies and practices accurately reflected the values and perspectives of all library staff. A recognition of and engagement with individual staff values, even when conflicting, remains significant to how EBLIP and library assessment are pursued (Magnus et al., 2018). Trying to determine user values and perspectives, without critically reflecting on our own, can mean inadvertent consequences for users from otherwise well-intentioned questions and decisions in EBP.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper aimed to offer a broad narrative overview and entry point for future research on values-based practice and EBLIP together. As it is not intended to be an exhaustive or systematic review, the broad scope and inclusion criteria represent a methodological limitation for its reproducibility and replicability. Future research or practice could build on the findings of this review to overlay or adapt values-based practice to an EBLIP model, as Young (2020b) does in library assessment. Extending a values-based or ethical lens would see decisions that reflect professional and organizational values enacted at each stage of evidence based practice, as part of an iterative process.

Conclusion

While values-based practice, as an established concept, is not explicitly addressed in the EBLIP literature, the significance of values to EBLIP processes is seen throughout the literature. The findings of this review affirm the relationship of values to reflective practice, decision making, and critical assessment practices in EBLIP. Library decision making can employ both values and evidence in partnership to not only support decision-making processes, but also to extend a values-based lens to library users. This lens emphasizes integrating social context into library services and decisions. Values-based practice presents opportunities to further a person-centred approach to EBLIP and further promote reflection in decision making. Such reflection encourages consideration of the motives for engaging in EBLIP initiatives and the positionality of library professionals and organizations throughout the process.

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